

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (**currently amended**): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column comprising

a female member adapted for slidably receiving a male member therein and at least one metal strip that is separate from the male member fitted therebetween having an uneven contact surface, characterized in that said metal strip is fitted between the male member and the female member and inside at least one recess in a fastening cage clamped to the external surface of said male member.

Claim 2 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said cage is clamped to the outside of the male member by deformations on the lateral surface thereof.

Claim 3 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said cage is injected directly on the male member.

Claim 4 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 3, further comprising a plurality of metal strips fitted inside respective recesses of said cage.

Claim 5 (**currently amended**): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column comprising:

a female member adapted for slidingly receiving a male member therein;  
at least one metal strip that is separate from the male member having an uneven contact surface; and  
a fastening cage fitted between the male member and the female member, said fastening cage having at least one recess, said fastening cage surrounding said male member, and said at least one metal strip being received in said at least one recess.

Claim 6 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 3, further comprising

a plurality of metal strips fitted inside respective recesses of said cage.

Claim 7 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 1, wherein

said male member has a substantially polygonal cross-sectional shape.

Claim 8 (**currently amended**) A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 1, wherein

said male member has a substantially triangular shape with flat blunt vertexes.

Claim 9 (**currently amended**) A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 1, wherein  
said male member has only flat blunt surfaces.

Claim 10 (previously presented): A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 5, wherein  
said male member has a substantially polygonal cross-sectional shape.

Claim 11 (**currently amended**) A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 5, wherein  
said male member has a substantially triangular shape with flat blunt vertexes.

Claim 12 (**previously presented**) A low sliding load intermediate shaft in a motor vehicle steering column as claimed in claim 5, wherein  
said male member has only flat blunt surfaces.